



## *Consumer Repair and Education Workforce*

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MAY 1997

**T**he focus of the Smog Check program is to identify and repair Gross Polluters—the small percentage of vehicles that pollute the most. State law requires that Gross Polluters be repaired at test-and-repair stations and certified at separate Test-Only or Referee Centers. Unfortunately, inadequate repairs can cause Gross Polluters to go back and forth, or "ping-pong," from repair stations to Referee or Test Only Centers, costing motorists time and money. To combat this the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) created CREW, the Consumer Repair and Education Workforce. CREW teams are made of BAR representatives, who return with the owners of Gross Polluters (upon their request) to the test-and-repair stations that made the inadequate repairs. While there, CREW representatives provide suggestions and feedback to the technicians who made the repairs and ensure the vehicles are re-repaired correctly.

*Clean air is  
everyone's  
job!*

The goals of CREW are:

- to ensure that vehicles are repaired, so they will pass the Smog Check inspection;
- to provide feedback and training to technicians about diagnosis and repair, so that they will correctly repair vehicles the first time;
- to lower the overall "ping-pong" rate relieving motorists of a costly and time consuming inconvenience;
- to gain consumer confidence in the Smog Check Program and the automotive repair industry by increasing the overall accuracy and efficiency of smog-related repairs; and
- to illustrate the environmental and economic benefits of properly maintained vehicles to consumers.

A Santa Ana CREW pilot began in September 1996 and ended in January 1997. The CREW pilot focused on gross-polluting vehicles that failed certification at the Referee Center in Santa Ana. CREW team members, on-site at the Referee Center, contacted consumers whose vehicles failed and offered to return to the repair shops with them.

CREW assistance facilitated successful resolutions for consumers, and, in many instances, although additional work was required, repair shops voluntarily waived the parts and labor costs.

During the four-month Santa Ana Pilot, DCA/BAR found that:

- Of the more than 1,800 vehicles inspected at the Santa Ana Referee Center during the pilot, more than one-third, or 664 vehicles, failed their test before CREW intervention.
- With the consent of consumers, DCA/BAR officials intervened in 206 of those cases, which involved 165 repair facilities in the area.
- About 86 percent, or 177 of the 206 vehicles, passed the inspection after CREW intervention.
- Failure rates declined by 8 percent at the Santa Ana Referee Center.

Based on the Santa Ana pilot's success, CREW is being expanded statewide. The CREW program now operates in Fresno, Hayward, Riverside, and Van Nuys.